



BOARD OF LEGAL EDUCATION TASMANIA

28 May 2026

Legal Services Council
Level 3, Public Trustee Building
19 O'Connell Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email: submissions@legalservicescouncil.org.au

Board of Legal Education Tasmania – Response to Review of Practical Legal Training Consultation Paper

This letter is in my capacity of Chair of the Board of Legal Education in Tasmania.

Practical legal training can be delivered under the current model

The Board does not support the proposed model for PLT upon which the Consultation Paper is based. The Board supports PLT reform. However, the Consultation Paper is predicated¹ on the assumption that the national and NSW survey results show that the current model of PLT is “no longer fit for purpose.” It is a flawed assumption. It may be accepted that the survey reveals “widespread dissatisfaction” with the cost and quality of PLT in Australia. However, the survey confirms, and experience in Tasmania demonstrates, that the current model, properly implemented, can produce “a markedly more positive experience of PLT across almost all measures”.²

It follows from the Tasmanian experience that satisfactory knowledge of, and competence in, the areas covered by the practical legal training competency standards **can be** delivered under the current model. The solution is to require providers to provide training which meets the standards. To adopt the suggested model would inevitably sacrifice the best practice model in favour of an alternative which will, in the view of this Board, be inferior at each stage. It is unrealistic to suggest³ that the Tasmanian Legal Practice Course (TLPC) could remain viable as a choice for those who are able to be admitted after having completed only a 4 week course and then PALT. Students will tend to the minimum requirements when there is no practical advantage to them doing otherwise.

The model of the training provided by the Centre for Legal Studies in Tasmania is summarised in the Consultation Paper through the case study at p 26. It is a model which requires face to face workshop style teaching grounded in real practice. It is strongly supported by teaching provided by members of different sectors of the profession, and by judges and magistrates.

¹ Stated at paragraph 61, p35.

² Consultation Paper, paragraph 5.2, p 33.

³ As is suggested in the Consultation Paper, p 44.

The Board agrees that there should be a consistent national approach to PLT. However, there is no evidence at all that the proposed model will provide more effective delivery of practical legal training and much to suggest that it will be a backward step.

Support for submissions made by UTAS and Centre for Legal Studies, and the Law Society of Tasmania

The Board has provided a response to the paper in this form because it otherwise supports the comprehensive joint submission made by Professor Gino Dal Pont of the University of Tasmania and Emma White, the Executive Director of the Centre for Legal Studies. The Centre for Legal Studies conducts the TLPC. Reference should be made to that detailed submission.

The Board also agrees with the submission made on behalf of the Law Society of Tasmania.

Law Courses

The Board does not support amendments to require law courses to include practical teaching and training of practical skills. The Board agrees with the detailed submission of the UTAS/TLPC that law degrees and PLT serve a different purpose. Mandating teaching of practical skills by universities will displace academic content, including for the significant percentage of students who do not intend to enter legal practice. Universities are generally not equipped or structured to provide effective practical skills training. Many academics do not have practice experience.

Adding skills training to an already heavy academic content will not facilitate the type of content delivery which the proposed reforms are aimed at achieving.

Delivery of PLT

The current PLT framework, if delivered at a proper standard, enables exposure to and competence in a wide range of core areas. It enables development of understanding through repetition, reflection and reinforcement. The majority of legal practice in Australia, especially in rural and regional areas, is conducted by small to medium firms and is general in nature. The Board supports a refinement of the core competency standards but, however they are expressed, a four week PLT model cannot deliver effective skills development and demonstrates a misunderstanding of how professional competence is formed. The process of competency based training cannot be achieved within such a short time frame. One week of “pre-reading” will make no material difference.

The result will be legal practitioners with no effective pre-admission training or skill development in vital practice areas.

Moreover, the proposed PLT model will not entitle a student for fee help financial assistance, possibly creating a barrier to admission in some cases.

Workplace experience

The Board supports retention of the requirement for at least 15 days of workplace experience prior to admission. The Board also supports updating the Standards on PLT Workplace Experience so as to provide clearer and more detailed guidance, thus improving consistency and educational value.

Post Admission Legal Training (PALT)

The Consultation Paper proposes that new lawyers would be required to undertake 15 hours of PALT in each of the first two years of practice, delivered by completing two specialist 7.5 hour courses in each year. This Board is strongly of the view that PALT at this level, even combined with four week pre-admission training, is not an acceptable substitute for the current requirements of PLT. It should not be a pathway to unrestricted legal practice.

The TLPC delivers more than 290 hours of practice area, skills and values training.

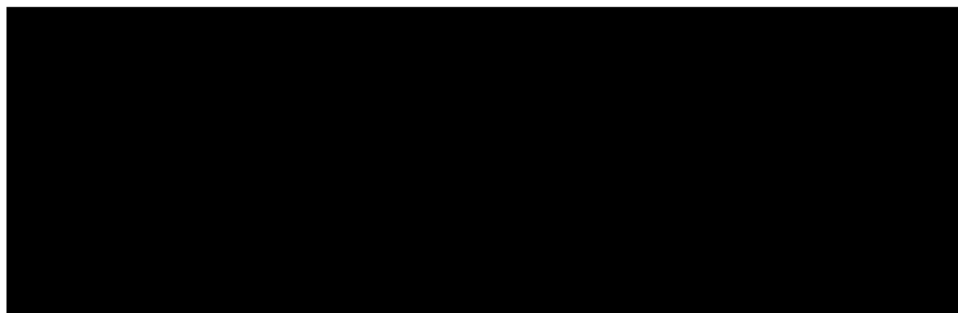
In contrast, the proposed PALT will not allow demonstration and assessment of engagement and application of knowledge. In a generalist jurisdiction, the practical effect is likely to be minimal. It will become a tick the box exercise.

Implementation of this proposal will require creation of a PALT regulation regime which is beyond the jurisdiction of this Board. In Tasmania, the Law Society is unlikely to be in a position to regulate PALT within the proposed timeframe.

In this State, the *Legal Profession (Board of Legal Education) Rules* provide that PLT must be provided by an approved legal training provider and result in satisfactory knowledge of and competence in the Practical Legal Training Competency Standards. In Tasmania those standards are substantially the same as in the Uniform Law jurisdictions, although there are some local differences.

The rules currently provide that PLT provided in another Australian jurisdiction must result in knowledge and competence which is “substantially the same as that approved for admission in Tasmania”. If there is inconsistent adoption and implementation of the proposed new scheme between the various jurisdictions, there would be a significant regulatory difficulty.

Yours faithfully,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of Justice Robert Pearce.

Justice Robert Pearce
Chair

cc The Hon Guy Barnett MP
 Deputy Premier
 Attorney-General